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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

CHURCH DECORATION.

A SERIES OF ARTICLES. NUMBER SIX.



IN THE SCHATZKAMMER OF AACHEN.

BY F. THORNTON MACAULAY.

OST noticeable among the venerable and interesting monuments one meets in passing over that delightful art-pilgrimage which leads from the Belfry of Bruges to the Spires of Cologne, is the Coronation Chapel of Charlemagne at Aix-la-Chapelle, or Aachen, as the Germanic throat has gutturalized it. It is nearly eleven centuries old. It was the culminating mark of favor which the great Gothic leader bestowed upon his beloved capital, and he spared in its construction and adornment nothing that sumptuous material and technical skill could then supply. Begun in 796, finished in 804, it demonstrates the indomitable energy of its builder which, in an age of slow and massive church-building, could outdo the speed with which flimsy modern structures are turned out. This, perhaps, should not be surprising, since Charlemagne had resources which made him to a great extent independent of sculptors and architects. He built his chapel largely from the pieces of other edifices; but, less Vandal than the builders of some of the early Christian churches, he did not break his pieces into ashlar before using them, but inserted entire in the new structure the fine marble columns he took from Ravenna. His ground plan was likewise boldly adapted from San Vitale, and the result is a curious and compelling subject for the architectural student. For him the Coronation Chapel will display a strange blending of constructive ingenuity with crudeness of proportion; of northern vigor, ignorant or contemptuous of academic rules, with the southern decorative spirit which pushes forth in exotic luxuriance through the austerity of the dominant outlines. Hardly anything now remains of the mosaics which once covered the vaulting; but the magnificent doors and the gallery parapets still bear witness to a surprising solidity and splendor of finish, and especially to the ruling influence of the Byzantine artificers to whom the Carolingian architects and sculptors were indebted for nearly every purely esthetic motive.

The traveler, if he be a man of active sympathies but of small perseverance and undecided artistic traits—if, in short, he be an average traveler, innocent of any special, enlivening stimulus, he is likely to leave Aachen with a prevailing impression of melancholy. At Aachen one feels himself to be in the Damascus of northern Europe and the thought may well make him meditative. But if he be a pertinacious and diplomatic person, he may, at small cost and less pains, spare himself the pangs of reflecting on the vanity of empires by obtaining admission to

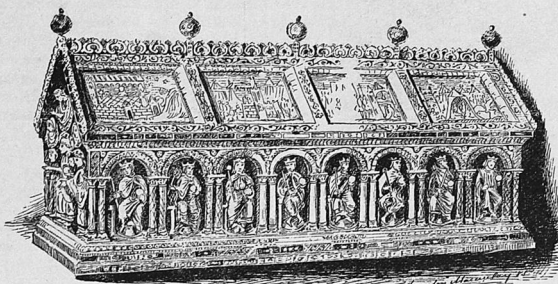


FIG. 1.—THE KARLSCHREIN.

the treasure chamber, the peerless Schatzkammer, of the Coronation Chapel. As he views the contents of this apartment, the melancholy evoked by the thousand years of masonry about him and the superabundant traces of time's tooth on the mosaics, will yield to wonder and enthusiasm. He will have before him a sight to compensate for untraceable moldings—the history of the goldsmith's art told in one of the most magnificent collections to be found in the whole of Europe—a collection which rivals that of St. Mark's at Venice or St. John's basilica at Monza, and which quite throws Cluny, Osnabrück and Hildesheim into the shade.

The collection has a strange history. In medieval times the Schatzkammer of Aix was famous throughout Europe for its priceless examples of goldsmith's work, not to mention its innumerable relics of sacred personages. It was a cynosure of art-

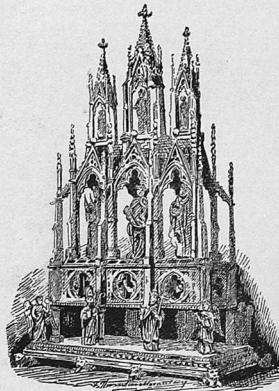


FIG. 2.—SHRINE IN GILDED SILVER.

workers, and the coveted prize of generations of feudal and more modern nobles and rulers. It shared the fortunes of Aachen, now in dangerous nearness to French troopers or German, and again the pride of the old town's burghers in the heyday of peace and prosperity. It has survived its vicissitudes, and lives now a Mecca for the student who would penetrate the mysteries of the goldsmith's work in Byzantine, in Gothic, or in Romanesque. In each of these domains it has master-works, evidences of the extraordinary technical and artistic skill of the medieval metal-worker.

The largest and most remarkable object in the collection is the famous *Karlschrein* (Fig. 1), or Shrine of Charles, the Palladium of Aachen, which contains the emperor's bones. This, which in its configuration and strikingly in its detail recalls the Shrine of the Three Kings at Cologne, is a box of about six and a half feet in length, with a Norman gable roof and altogether of an architectural effect. It is made of silver thickly plated and encrusted with gold and inlaid with jewels and niello. On each side are eight arches, of northern Romanesque pattern, each seemingly supported by two columns, which might have been copied from Worms or Limburg. The niches are filled with little statues of the German kings and emperors in gilded silver. One of the gables shows the sitting figure of the Virgin Mary, with the archangels Gabriel and Michael to the left and right and angels above. The narrow end not shown in our sketch contains the portraits in relief of Charlemagne, Pope Leo III. and Bishop Turpinus, the life-long friend and traditional good genius of the emperor. The surfaces of the roof are divided into eight recessed panels, filled with reliefs representing legends in the life of Charlemagne. The emperor was unconsciously a great myth-maker, as the reader may agreeably discover for himself in the pages of Mrs. Clement's *Handbook of Legendary and Mythologic Art*.

The reliefs of the *Karlschrein* are of the usual type of the north German mortuary sculpture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The style of treatment is strongly marked by that Byzantine formality and unpicturesqueness which was plentifully imported under the Saxon emperors. The inlay likewise betrays Byzantine influence. The art of enamel properly began at Constantinople, whence it was carried to the west to find a fostering home in Limoges. The German and the French artificers created a new mode of working in enamel. They dug out the ground of the metal leaving the lines raised like those of an engraving and so produced the very durable works known as *emailx champlevés*. The Byzantine artists soldered their threads of gold to the surface they wished to enamel and their work is the familiar *cloisonné*. It is not strange to find beautiful pieces of enameling in Aachen. In early times the northern centres of this industry flourished at Cologne and Siegburg and other Rhenish art schools, whose masters were within easy call of the rich men of Aachen.

The most imposing object of the collection is a shrine of gilded silver, of later workmanship, which stands above four feet in height and weighs over one hundred pounds. It is made in the shape of a fanciful Gothic cathedral or baldacchino, with spires, flying buttresses, and other architectural features in the style of the best period of Rhenish Pointed. This chapel is supported on a richly molded base by eight columns. Angels

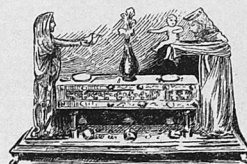


FIG. 4.—RELIQUARY IN GILDED SILVER.

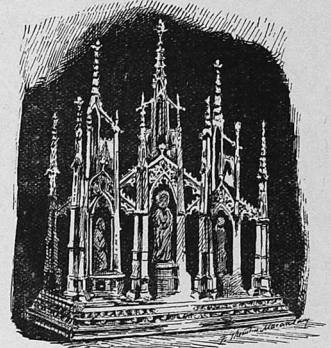


FIG. 3.—SHRINE IN GILDED SILVER.

stand at the four corners, and prelates with crook or crozier in front of the immediate pillars. The statuettes in the open canopy represent Charlemagne, the Virgin Mary, and St. Catherine. Beneath the middle spire there is a figure of Christ, and under the smaller spires are angels. The large central compartment



FIG. 5.
BYZANTINE RELIQUARY IN
GILDED SILVER AND
ENAMEL.

contains a drawer with a quatrefoil aperture filled with beautiful crystal plates through which one is permitted to rever divers relics, not only of Charlemagne, but even, as it is claimed, of Christ—of which latter relics, it must be said, the untaught traveler rarely doubts the genuineness until he has escaped the glamor of the Schatzkammer and had the credulity in medieval wonders shaken out of him by the clatter of the too iconoclastic railway. Before we take leave of this exquisite work, which we have sketched (Fig. 2), it should be recorded that it was the gift of Charles IV., "the arch-step-father of the Holy Roman Empire," and has graced immemorial civic and religious processions.

Another master-work, conceived in the same architectural spirit but on a smaller scale, is shown in Fig. 3. It is a little more than a yard high, weighs fully as much as the first chapel, and like it is built of gilded silver. On three pedestals, and beneath as many airy pinacles are statuettes of Christ, St. Peter and St. Stephen, the sculptor's work possessing this time a distinctly modern picturesqueness of modelling. The workmanship is throughout superb. The inlay and relief of the base moldings have been executed with surprising skill. Altogether, it is impossible to imagine anything more delicately beautiful than this miniature cathedral. Base, columns, tracery, finials, are wrought out with unvarying faithfulness to purity of style within the strict artistic limits of Gothic forms as applied to goldsmith's work.

The next of our sketches (Fig. 4) is that of a reliquary in gilded silver the sculptures of which represent the offering of Christ in the Temple. Mary holds out over the altar a pair of doves, and old St. Simeon bears the infant Jesus in his extended hands. The two figures are stiff, stunted and archaic, the draperies leaden. Relics of St. Simeon are locked in the elaborately, if rudely, worked altar-table.

As might be expected of a medieval religious collection, this one is mostly rich in reliquaries. The reliquary or portable shrine for the keeping of sacred relics was a feature of Middle Age life, and it was made in such variety of shapes and sizes as permitted the humblest to carry about with them some demon-defying amulet. The *encolpium* was worn in the bosom; the *phylacterium*, around the neck. The *feretrum* or *feretory* was a large shrine intended, like those we have been describing, to be borne in processions. Other examples of reliquaries from the Schatzkammer are shown in Figs 5, 6, 7, and 8. Fig. 5 is made of gold in the form of a Greek chapel, and is decorated in relief and intaglio. The workmanship is pronouncedly Byzantine, a piece of criticism which is supported by the assertion that the head which this reliquary contains formerly rested on the shoulders of the Hungarian St. Anastasius. Fig. 6 is a Gothic reliquary of gilded silver which encloses a piece of the true cross. Fig. 7 is a silver cross of Greek design, in a plate heavily ornamented with gold, enamel, and jewels. Fig. 8 is

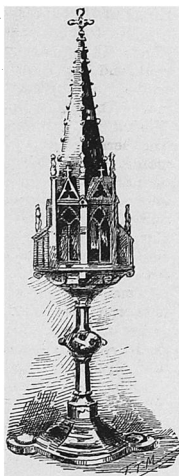


FIG. 6.
GOTHIC RELIQUARY.

the beautiful repository of a piece of the rope with which Jesus was bound in the pillory.

Fig. 9 is a monstrance encrusted with gold and contains a wax *agnus dei* which enjoys the distinction of a very ancient papal benediction. A few simpler reliquaries are in the form of oblong boxes sparingly ornamented.

The Schatzkammer boasts several curious little separate statues. (Fig. 10) illustrates two of these. To the smaller the donor, a man clearly not less self-satisfied than pious, has affixed his effigy kneeling in devotion. The other, unaccountably ascribed to fourteenth century workmen, makes the Virgin a

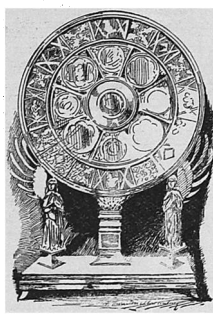


FIG. 7.—BYZANTINE RELIQUARY
IN SILVER AND GOLD.

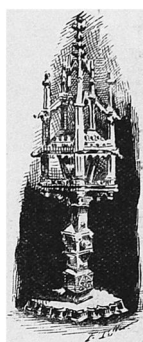


FIG. 8.
GOTHIC RELIQUARY IN
SILVER.

display a tenth century basic design with Gothic features and rococo details superadded as the centuries slipped away and fashion yielded to fashion. The hand of the enricher has long since done its utmost, and not a touch waits to be added to these lovely heirlooms of quaint Aachen. Kings helped the citizens in their labors of enrichment. Among the German rulers, Henry II, surnamed the Saint, Charles VI, and Richard of Cornwell showed their special favor by gifts of princely quantities of gold, silver, and jewels; Lewis the Great of Hungary increased its stores; and Louis IX. of France leavened the gathering with the elegance of French taste and assisted it with French gold. The personal interest of these relics would fill a curious volume.

The multitude of the Schatzkammer relics bewilders one. There are many golden crosses, two liburiums or monstrances, containing respectively the girdles of Christ and Mary; more reliquaries with pieces of the true cross;

various bones of saints; astonishingly numerous waifs and strays gathered from Charlemagne's distinguished anatomy; a solid silver bust of him: his golden cross, his hunting horn, his crown and sceptre; and a statue of St. Peter bearing a link of the chain which shackled him in his prison cell. And there is one exquisite specimen of a ninth century gospel-book written on parchment, bound in gold and ivory, and lavishly inlaid with jewels. Whenever a complete and copious catalogue of this collection shall be published, it will fill a portly volume, which must prove a boon to art students and art workers. The Schatzkammer holds in itself a potential renaissance of the goldsmith's art, as it once was, and it will

be an auspicious day for industrial art when its treasures may be unlocked to the world.

CONTRASTS OF COLORS.

AS a guide to the decorator who may be uncertain as to his ability to properly contrast colors, we offer the following which, if observed, will always serve as a guide in his decorative work:

- Black and Warm Brown.
- Violet and Pale Green.
- Violet and Light Rose.
- Deep Blue and Golden Brown.
- Chocolate and Bright Blue.
- Deep Red and Gray.
- Maroon and Warm Green.
- Deep Blue and Pink.
- Chocolate and Pea Green.



FIG. 9.—SILVER MONSTRANCE.



FIG. 10.
STATUETTES IN GILDED SILVER.